

“The Lynchpin” Grapples with Frustration and Distrust

The Fourth US-ROK Strategic Dialogue, February 2012

Brad Glosserman and David Santoro
Pacific Forum CSIS

June 2012

This report is the product of a collaboration between Pacific Forum CSIS, Naval Postgraduate School Center on Contemporary Conflict, and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

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**U.S. Naval Postgraduate School (NPS)
Center on Contemporary Conflict (CCC)
Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for
Countering WMD (PASCC)**

Project Cost: \$144,900

PASCC Report Number 2012 006

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE JUN 2012		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2012 to 00-00-2012	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE 'The Lynchpin' Grapples with Frustration and Distrust				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School (NPS),Center on Contemporary Conflict (CCC),1411 Cunningham Road,Monterey,CA,93943				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 32	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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For further information, please contact:

The Center on Contemporary Conflict

Naval Postgraduate School
1411 Cunningham Road
Monterey, CA 93943

ccc@nps.edu

or

OSRDInfo@dtra.mil

Pacific Forum CSIS

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Key Findings/Recommendations

The Pacific Forum CSIS, with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), hosted the fourth US-ROK Strategic Dialogue in Maui, Feb. 9-10, 2012. Some 40 government officials, security specialists, and next-generation analysts participated in discussions that explored security perspectives, the regional balance of power, and the future of the US-ROK alliance, while focusing on extended deterrence on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. Key takeaways include:

- US-ROK relations are strong, the alliance is in good shape, and the two governments are working together on a range of peninsula security issues. Koreans characterize the US commitment to the defense of their country as strong.
- This positive state of affairs could deteriorate during the 2012 election season in the ROK and the US regardless of who wins. Issues in 2012/13 that threaten to upend relations include: the Korea-US free trade agreement; OPCON transfer; CFC dissolution; the US-ROK 123 nuclear negotiations; US-ROK negotiations to extend the range of its missiles.
- Underlying policy debates is a deeply felt sense in the ROK that it isn't trusted by the United States. On many of the issues identified above, South Koreans seem to believe that US-ROK disagreements are not the result of policy differences, but reflect a particular distrust of ROK intentions. This belief has a corrosive impact on the alliance and the bilateral relationship insofar as it makes every disagreement appear to be a test of the alliance. It also means that every dispute has a deep-rooted emotional component, which can be exploited in an election campaign.
- There are lingering ROK concerns about how the transfer of OPCON and the dissolution of the Combined Forces Command will play out and their potentially damaging impact on the US commitment to the defense of South Korea. ROK participants expressed increasing confidence in the ROK ability to handle the transitions, however. Both sides expressed concern about the prospects for ROK defense reform.
- Extended deterrence is still seen as successful at the strategic level in preventing all-out hostilities or a North Korean nuclear attack but there remains frustration that deterrence failed at the tactical level. ROK recognition of the difference between these two levels is positive and needs to be emphasized.
- The forceful US-ROK response in the aftermath of the 2010 incidents appears to have made an impression on Pyongyang (and Beijing) and prevented further provocations.
- The ROK's credible threat of a forceful response to future North Korea provocations enjoys US support, but there is concern in the US about the proportionality of any response and the degree of prior coordination. While the ROK should lead in responding to individual provocations, prior consultation with the US is critical.

- The ROK concept of proactive deterrence remains opaque. Several US participants worried about operational implications of the concept but other Americans provided assurances that ROK counterparts understand what to do in specific situations, regardless of a lack of clarity at the conceptual level.
- ROK participants understand that detailed discussion of when nuclear weapons would be used is not wise, but they remain torn by the need for reassurance and argue that it can be provided with some details on when the extended deterrent would be used.
- While the ROK government does not support reintroduction of US tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea, the sentiment underlying the call for such a move – a sense that North Korea can provoke at low levels with impunity – is widespread among the public.
- The possibility of “nonlinear” events on the Korean Peninsula is increasing. Alliance managers must prepare for new and novel developments and/or crises.
- South Koreans, like other Asian allies and partners, are worried about the impact of US budget constraints on US defense capabilities. They are especially concerned about the increased demands that will be put on allies to contribute to alliances and warned that this would be especially counterproductive during the ROK elections. They asked for reassurance about the “steadiness” of US Forces Korea.
- While several ROK participants emphasized that a strengthened US-ROK alliance is not aimed at neighbors – implying but not saying China – there was less defense of Chinese prerogatives and sensitivities in contrast to previous meetings. Still, Koreans see China as playing an instrumental in any eventual Korean unification.
- ROK participants insist that the primary obstacle to enhanced US-ROK-Japan relations is not fear of offending China but long-standing issues between the ROK and Japan.
- All participants applaud cooperation through the Trilateral Cooperation and Oversight Group (TCOG), but there was general agreement that the TCOG “toolbox” needs to be expanded to deal with future North Korean contingencies.
- Alliance watchers are frustrated that the potential of the 2009 US-ROK Joint Vision Statement has not been realized. There appears to be a disconnect between activism among the militaries and the inaction of other alliance managers. The “2+2 mechanism” should do more to flesh out this vision. The public must be brought into this process.

Conference Report

The US-ROK alliance is strong – many consider it the strongest US alliance in Asia today. President Obama has visited Seoul more than any other capital during his term in office and refers to the bilateral alliance as “the lynchpin of not only security for the Republic of Korea and the United States but also for the Pacific as a whole...” Given this felicitous state, it is jarring then to hear that more than two-thirds of the ROK public seeks the reintroduction of US tactical nuclear weapons on their territory or, failing that, the development of an indigenous nuclear capability.

In an attempt to understand this anomalous situation – a strong alliance in which one partner seems insecure enough to seek new nuclear guarantees – the Pacific Forum CSIS, with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), brought 30 senior security specialists, academics, and current and former government officials from the United States and the Republic of Korea (all attending in their private capacities), and 17 Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders to Hawaii in February 2012 for two days of discussion on the status and future of the security alliance. Although the bilateral relationship is as strong as ever, many issues will strain this relationship in the months ahead. While this report has been reviewed by all participants, it is not meant to be a consensus document; its conclusions reflect the views of the chair alone.

Security Developments and Dynamics

We began, as always, with national assessments of the security environment. Our US presenter underscored the political transitions underway throughout the region, noting that they heighten uncertainty and could exacerbate tensions. Europe’s economic problems threaten to spill over into the region as well, adding yet another layer of uncertainty.

Our presenter detected a “softening” of the Lee Myung-bak administration’s policy toward the DPRK, a shift that has not been reciprocated by the North. While there appears to be great concern in the South for the suffering in the North, there is also frustration that Pyongyang remains as hardline as it does. The ROK economy remains strong, relative to most other Western economies, but it has softened and this, along with other factors, is pushing public sentiment to the left as South Korea enters the election season.

In the DPRK, the succession process is proceeding smoothly after the death of Kim Jong Il; significantly, China is a solid backer of the new team. Hunger, however, remains a problem throughout the country. DPRK antagonism toward the ROK and President Lee remains high; apart from the anger at the policies of the Seoul government, Pyongyang is also trying to influence the 2012 elections and push voters (and candidates) toward a more concessionary position. Meanwhile, the DPRK continues to seek bilateral dialogue with the United States. This is frustrated by the DPRK belief that nuclear possession is justified and that disarmament is impossible under current circumstances. Pyongyang believes that nuclear weapons are an insurance policy against attack and are useful to attract attention, especially from the United States.

In Japan, significant changes are underway in the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), with Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko adopting a tougher approach toward China and cognizant of dangers posed by the DPRK. The US-Japan alliance remains surprisingly strong, given ongoing problems regarding base relocation plans. In China, leadership transition to the fifth generation is likely to consolidate a conservative, risk-averse form of governance. Economic concerns remain the primary focus for the Communist Party leadership. Nationalism is on the climb and PLA budget and capabilities continue to expand. It is a troubling mix. In Taiwan, the recent election suggests growing democratic maturity and the economy of the island continues to be linked more closely with that of the mainland. In the South China Sea, China's overreaction to the pushback by rival claimants has moderated but continues to drive responses by ASEAN members. A remarkable shift in Myanmar is taking place, and the region is responding appropriately.

Our speaker had some concern about the US "pivot" toward Asia. As is often noted, the US never left the region, notwithstanding distractions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Soon after taking office, President Obama, with Secretary Clinton in the lead, sought to draw more attention to Asia. Hopes for a partnership with China have been disappointing, a process aided by Chinese overreach in the South China Sea. In the fall of 2011, Obama sought a "rebalancing" at the APEC and EAS summits by recognizing Asian economic success, regularizing a non-adversarial balancing of China, and reassuring allies and friends. This process faces difficulties: the relationship with China is subject to ups and downs, there is uncertainty about Obama's trade policy and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade initiative, a lack of broad Asian expertise among US foreign policy elites, and a range of other serious problems elsewhere in the world, such as the economic crises in Europe and the seemingly intractable Iranian nuclear crisis.

Our ROK speaker echoed many of those concerns. For him, the three most important developments were the death of Kim Jong Il, the US "pivot" at a time of heightened economic concerns in the US, and the elections in the ROK and the United States, along with the leadership transition in China.

He agreed with our US presenter that the death of Kim Jong Il did not result in instability in Pyongyang, despite serious questions about Kim Jong Un's ability to lead that reflected inexperience, youth, and dependence on the Korean Peoples' Army (KPA). Kim Jong Un's reign is likely to be shaped by growing Chinese assistance and largesse, a larger KPA footprint in the decision-making process, and an intricate balance between the Kim dynasty, the army, and core supporters of Kim Jong Un in the party and security apparatus. For our speaker the key question to the young Kim's survival is whether he can provide for his people without embracing reform. Chinese aid is important, but growing dependence on PRC assistance will yield resentment within the leadership. In the more immediate future, Kim Jong Un will consolidate his power base with full support from the KPA and the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) leadership, suggesting that the status quo is likely to prevail.

Significantly, the US-ROK alliance has never been as solid as during the Obama-Lee era. Still, it is not clear whether the relationship can withstand the forces unleashed by domestic politics. In January 2012, the Obama administration outlined its "Defense Priorities for the 21st Century" the first of its efforts to reconfigure security commitments and forces in an era of

declining defense resources. The document stresses that current force levels in the ROK (and Japan) will be maintained and that the US commitment to the defense of these two allies will remain unchanged. For the ROK, the key challenge is meeting defense and deterrence missions vis-à-vis the DPRK as well as coping with the expanding Chinese footprint in the region. The recent US “pivot” is a welcome move.

The upcoming April ROK National Assembly election will likely be a disaster for the ruling Grand National Party. [Editor’s note: it wasn’t, but that was certainly the conventional wisdom at the time and shows how fast public moods can shift in South Korea.] The conservatives have a chance of coming back in the December 2012 presidential election. Our speaker was alarmed by the Democratic Party’s warning that it will abrogate the KORUS FTA, a bold (some say reckless) strategy for a party that negotiated the original terms of the agreement. The Democratic Party has called for a rapid return to the Sunshine Policy and a foreign policy that is more balanced between the United States and China. Several factors are likely to constrain any abrupt shift in ROK politics: uncertainty in the DPRK, Chinese influence in and around the Korean Peninsula, and a slow global economic recovery coupled with problems in the ROK-US alliance, if the Democratic Party wins the presidential contest.

As anticipated, the meaning and significance of the US “pivot” received considerable attention. US participants emphasized that the United States never left the region and that its renewed emphasis on Asia would outlive the Obama administration. Similarly, they reassured the group that budgetary constraints would not affect the US posture. (Despite the end of the two-war strategy, the United States remains able and willing to deter and defeat aggression and confront more than one adversary at a time.) ROK participants demonstrated a good grasp of US policy and intentions. They professed to be reassured by the pivot language, and acknowledged that the US never left Northeast Asia (while conceding that might not be the perception in Southeast Asia; indeed one speaker characterized the US presence elsewhere as “relatively weak.”). One ROK participant “liked” the emphasis on Asia in official US documents, although another ROK speaker noted that he didn’t see many references to Asia in the new Defense Guidance. At the same time, there is concern by the talk of austerity budgets. They are especially worried that Washington will be asking its allies to pick up the slack and compensate for diminished US funding for security concerns. If not, there are questions about the sustainability of the US commitment to regional defense.

In contrast to discussions with Japanese experts, the Pentagon’s new AirSea Battle concept attracted comparatively little attention. In fact, it was hardly mentioned at all. The one comment was worth noting, however: an ROK analyst suggested that the emphasis on air and sea is troubling for Koreans who worry about a large ground assault.

Turning to China, an ROK participant characterized Korean views of China as “schizophrenic”: while deeply sensitive to the increasing role that China plays in South Korea’s economic future – and a resultant need to maintain good relations with a key trade and investment partner – a recent Asan Institute poll shows that 57 percent of respondents see China as the most serious security threat to their country. (Japan came second with 28 percent seeing it as a threat, and the US was third, at 11 percent.) That same poll shows ROK citizens overwhelmingly believe that the United States is the best security guarantee for their country. In

this context, the South Korean view that they were “reassured but not convinced” by the US pivot assumes added significance.

Strategic Assessment

China was the focus of our second session as participants took up the regional balance of power. Our ROK speaker explained that there was a growing diffusion of power in Asia, both among major powers and between them and emerging powers. The United States continues to play the preeminent role in regional security and remains the primary deliverer of public goods, but China is making inroads on this position. This development is generating concern about Chinese military modernization. For our ROK speaker, the role of nuclear weapons is still central to the regional balance of power, although other factors play a growing role in the strategic assessment. Our speaker pointed to the conclusion of the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS), US decision to join the East Asia Summit, and pursuit of the TPP initiative as examples. Nonetheless, nuclear weapons remain critical because of the DPRK’s nuclear weapon program. This explains the ROK’s insistence on mention of the provision of extended deterrence, including the US nuclear umbrella, at the June 2009 Obama-Lee summit.

Predictably, China has criticized the “pivot,” calling it “a manifestation of a Cold War mentality.” While US allies and partners welcome Washington’s commitment to reengage the region, they are concerned about Chinese reactions and will seek to balance the United States and China. Ironically, both China and those allies see the pivot as part of an effort to balance China. As was made clear in the first session, US allies and partners are carefully studying the implications of US budget cuts and ask if Washington can match words with deeds. US pursuit of a smaller and leaner (but more agile and flexible) force will force a new division of labor on the US and its allies. This is always difficult, but elections and leadership changes throughout the region could alter current dynamics.

For its part, the ROK does not approach the ROK-US alliance and the ROK-China partnership as a zero-sum game. Looking like Japan-China relations of a few years ago, there is a “hot” economic relationship between the ROK and China and a “cool” political one. Regardless of who wins the ROK presidential elections, efforts to redress this imbalance are unlikely to come at the expense of the ROK-US alliance, which is considered the lynchpin of peace in the region.

Our US speaker noted a palpable flux in the distribution of economic, military, and political power in Asia. This troubles him because shifts in the distribution of power can be destabilizing: states gaining power may overestimate their leverage and miscalculate their exercise of power (and states losing power may not fully comprehend the magnitude of their loss and miscalculate as well).

He also believes that the need to rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific is reflected in US policy. It is manifested in stronger bilateral security alliances, deepening working relationships with emerging powers (like India), engaging regional multilateral institutions, expanding trade and investment, and forging a broader military presence. Complementing the strategic pivot is the emergence of an East Asian regional architecture that is spurred by trilateral (US-ROK-Japan) relations. (Low-key, discreet projects could be used to build and institutionalize a

framework that leads to a regional security mechanism.) Although the United States is also trying to expand cooperation and build strategic trust with China (and calling on Beijing to be more transparent and open about its strategic intentions, military programs, and force structure), rebalancing may look like containment or encirclement to the Chinese. Balancing and containment, however, are two different things. Unlike containment, rebalancing seeks a stable, mutually acceptable distribution of power. It need not be a zero-sum game. The key challenge, however, is creating and maintaining a stable balance of power without giving the impression of containment.

China's rise is driven by its economic dynamism, which has led to impressive growth in its military power. China has sought to use its growing power to enforce sovereignty claims in the South China Sea – one of the world's most important trading routes and an area of large untapped oil reserves. This has spurred nationalist sentiment in the region and pushed a number of states closer to the United States.

For our US speaker, the most urgent, near-term strategic challenge in East Asia is the DPRK. Nuclear weapons are now in the hands of a 20-something dictator who is likely to burnish his credentials with provocations ranging from incidents at sea to missile and nuclear tests. Equally troubling is the prospect that the DPRK may soon be able to miniaturize nuclear weapons and mount them on ballistic missiles that could threaten Japan and US territories, including the US mainland. Credible options are in short supply. The US wants North-South relations to improve and a serious demonstration (with concrete steps) by the North toward denuclearization before the Six-Party Talks can resume. Even if a return to the Talks is possible, Pyongyang is unlikely to relinquish its nuclear programs.

We probed ROK perceptions of the rise of China. There is a perception in the US that the ROK is less concerned about China's rise and its strategic impact than is the US and other US allies in the region. ROK participants disagreed, arguing that while their most immediate threat was the DPRK, military preparations are geared toward China. One participant suggested that China's reaction to the 2010 DPRK provocations led to a "minor" tipping point in ROK thinking about China. Although no ROK president will admit his concerns about China's rise, an ROK participant argued that these concerns are as strong as those of Japan.

South Korean participants also pushed back against the notion – which surfaced in previous rounds of the strategic dialogue – that this divergence in views regarding China poses a constraint on trilateral (US-ROK-Japan) cooperation. (Several South Korean participants conceded that China will play a key role in the peninsula's reunification, so Seoul must be attentive to Beijing's thinking.) Instead, they insisted (virtually unanimously) that the most important obstacle to such cooperation is the powerful enmity between South Korea and Japan. As one ROK participant explained, "specific proposals from the US that focus on the military might trigger political issues because of Japan, not because of the potential response by China." Several Korean participants emphasized the emotional component of Korean thinking, which puts any Seoul government "in a very tight jacket." Yet another ROK participant asked how the Korean reluctance to move forward in this field undermines US interests; more messaging is needed to underscore the value of such efforts.

Nevertheless, all participants agreed that such cooperation is desirable and should be pursued. DPRK provocations and uncertainties about China's future make that task more urgent. A foundation exists: a US participant noted the development of the Defense Trilateral Talks that facilitate Navy to Navy interactions. When someone identified the Trilateral Cooperation and Oversight Group (TCOG) as an example of the potential of such collaboration, another participant countered that its ambit was too limited – it is designed to deal with nuclear issues – especially given the range of provocations that the DPRK is now trying. Participants on both sides called for more creative thinking to identify “low hanging fruit” for cooperation. A US participant suggested that Seoul look at trilateralism more broadly: it seems overly focused on Northeast Asia.

While China's rise was the biggest factor recalibrating the strategic balance, we also debated the impact of North Korea's nuclear program. While Pyongyang knows that it cannot fight and win a nuclear war – no matter what the DPRK says, its constant reference to US nuclear weapons means it knows well the consequences of a conflict – an ROK participant conceded that there has been “a relative dissipation of deterrence ... at least psychologically.” A cap has been placed on ROK responses to North Korean provocations, no matter how the rules of engagement are changed. A blunt South Korea assessment concluded that the South has conventional superiority among the two Koreas, but a growing DPRK nuclear capability means the need for extended nuclear deterrence is increasing.

It is worth noting that more than one South Korean expressed some concern about the decision to end the “two war strategy.” US participants countered that the US strategy merely codifies what has been a reality for defense planners for some time and reminded the group that the US goal is to be able to deter and defeat aggression while fighting elsewhere. That did not mollify an ROK critic, who noted that while the US is ready to fight two wars, it looks like the Korean Peninsula is the second priority.

Domestic Politics: Transition and the Deterrent

In our third session, we probed more deeply the domestic political forces that shape security policy in both countries. Our US speaker stressed that despite political tensions resulting from very different outlooks, much was accomplished during the Bush-Roh era and the alliance was strengthened, although there were tensions in the last years of the Bush tenure. The Obama administration's alliance management style, which has given priority to policy coordination, and the Lee administration, which elevated the ROK's global role on a range of issues, helped strengthen the alliance even more. Both men seem to like each other; their personal relationship is the foundation for what many consider the strongest US alliance in Asia. Our speaker even suggested that ratification of the KORUS agreement gave the “pivot” credibility. Unfortunately, he concluded that things can only go down from here.

He expects continuity in US Asia policy: credit the broad bipartisan consensus in Washington. But our speaker warned that the US strategy can succeed only if the economy avoids a double-dip recession, if the euro crisis stabilizes, if the drawdown in Afghanistan proceeds smoothly, and if we avoid conflict in Iran or Pakistan. Mitt Romney, the leading GOP contender for the nomination, has a strong group of responsible and experienced policy experts,

but many of his Korea advisors are ideologically driven. Asia policy in a second Obama administration could shift depending on key appointments. In the ROK, significant differences exist between the political parties on North Korea, Japan, trade policy, and nuclear weapons. Our speaker detected signs of real change in ROK politics, evidenced most clearly in the election of Park Won-Soon in the Seoul mayoral race last year. There is an anti-incumbent mood in Korea and it makes prediction of the future of domestic politics difficult.

Still, key issues for the alliance are easy to discern. They include the renegotiation of the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement, which will be punted to the next administration. This could become a real problem for the two countries if it becomes a debate over ROK sovereignty. The recent threat from the opposition to renegotiate KORUS, if pursued, would also have a deleterious impact on the alliance and would deprive the United States and the ROK of a one powerful indication of partnership; it would also tarnish prospects for the ROK joining the TPP. Of course, there are also the perennial sore spots: the wartime OPCON transfer, DPRK policy, and US-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation. The current trajectory -- conservatives taking a beating in both elections this year -- could be reversed by further DPRK provocations, if the regime collapsed, or if the GNP managed to reinvent itself in a way that appeals to young voters.

Once again, our ROK speaker took up the US “pivot,” anticipating that Washington will be forced to engage China more actively while strengthening its alliance system in Asia. He expects growing defense burden sharing with allies, including with the ROK. As strong as the alliance is now, victories by the Republican Party in the United States and the Democratic Party in the ROK in the forthcoming elections would have powerful and negative consequences for the bilateral relationship. He reckons that a second Obama administration will be more active in Asia and more focused on engagement with the DPRK, at least initially. A Republican administration would likely change course, and take a harder line against Pyongyang, including tighter sanctions and interdiction operations. The United States may also seek regime change. If so, a victory by the Democratic Party in the ROK would trigger real stress in the US-ROK alliance as a new Seoul government took a softer line toward the DPRK and China, perhaps even at the expense of the alliance. The KORUS FTA might also be abrogated and fights over issues such as bilateral missile defense cooperation could reemerge.

Discussion focused on South Korea; in particular we sought to understand the thinking of ROK voters. ROK participants explained that South Koreans are most focused on the economy; foreign policy is low on the list of their concerns. Still, less than 30 percent of South Koreans approve of the current government’s policy toward the DPRK, while 59 percent disapprove. We were told that most of their complaints reflect anger at how the government makes policy, not what that policy might be. That explains the confusion of a US participant who couldn’t understand why a party would run against the alliance when it enjoys support from 78 percent of the population.

We drilled down on several problematic issues for the alliance, such as the prospect of transfer of wartime control of OPCON. Conservatives in the ROK remain adamantly opposed to this shift, even though it has already been delayed once to buy time for the ROK to prepare. (There have been suggestions that the restraint imposed by the US on Seoul when responding to North Korea provocations during 2010 has altered South Korea thinking; there may be shifts, but

opposition is still the mainstream view.) Most Americans agreed that the desirability of the transfer notwithstanding, it sends the wrong signal to Pyongyang in current circumstances. One US participant disagreed, noting that the worst possible solution is continually preparing for the shift but never actually handing over authority. Yet another US participant suggested that the real problem is not OPCON transfer, but the decision to roll up the Combined Forces Command; for South Koreans, that is the real symbol of (feared) US disengagement.

The second big issue concerned ROK nuclear capabilities. A US participant insisted that ROK forces may not be able to deter a DPRK nuclear attack but they can deter a DPRK conventional attack. ROK participants agreed. Thus, most Americans were perplexed by the strong support in the ROK public for the redeployment of US tactical nuclear weapons to the ROK – some two thirds of the public – or the development of an indigenous nuclear capability – nearly 70 percent. An ROK participant made clear that his government does not support either option and all ROK participants agreed that neither move would strengthen ROK security. Given that understanding and the fact that most South Koreans don't believe that the North would use nuclear weapons against them, support for nuclear options seems to reflect 1) concern that the North is using its nuclear capabilities to provoke Seoul without fear of retaliation and 2) rising frustration over South Korea's inability to change North Korean thinking or behavior. Korean participants applauded the creation of the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee (EDPC); it is considered an important way to identify ROK concerns and for the US to be seen as responding to them. Ominously, an ROK participant warned that while the nuclear discussion in the South has quieted, more DPRK provocations could revive it.

The third and most worrying topic was the US-ROK civilian nuclear cooperation agreement. The language of this discussion was most heated and the emotions most raw. While ROK participants noted that it was a low priority item on the political agenda – and mostly a conservative concern – they warned it is a barometer of the alliance's health. South Korea participants, including strong supporters of the alliance, insisted that the issue was critical to their country's future. By 2016, South Korea's waste storage facilities will be full, and the country's future as a nuclear power exporter hinges on its capacity to provide full service (including reprocessing). US reluctance to agree to permit the ROK to proceed with pyro-processing was criticized as demonstrating “a lack of trust” in South Korea, and called a “big, big, big trust gap” between the two countries, especially given South Korea's strong nonproliferation credentials. One ROK speaker noted that his country understands the consequences of having its own nuclear weapon – and they are all bad – so fears that Seoul might proliferate are unfounded. Americans countered that trust of the ROK is never mentioned in the US; rather the concern is global norms and setting bad precedents. To this, South Koreans responded that the US doesn't seem to have problems making exceptions for other countries, typically pointing to India. In another indicator of the potential ill will that lies just beneath the surface of this issue, several South Koreans pointed out that they are just looking for the same treatment afforded Japan in nuclear matters. Indeed, as one ROK participant noted, while South Korea is among the top five nuclear power states in the world, his country is in the lowest rank of US nuclear partners. The US must pay more attention to ROK status concerns when addressing this issue.

Korean Peninsula Developments

The fourth session tried to make sense of developments in the northern half of the Korean Peninsula and how the two countries should respond. For our US speaker, domestic priorities dominate North Korean decision-making. This year is crucial since it was decreed that 2012 – the 100th birthday of Kim Il Sung – would mark the DPRK’s emergence as a “strong and prosperous nation.” Yet, despite Chinese assistance, the country is broke and hungry, unable to provide food, fertilizer, and fuel for its people. The DPRK also needs “breathing” room to consolidate Kim Jong Un’s rise to power. China has pressured Pyongyang to encourage the resumption of dialogue, but Beijing’s bottom line has not changed: it still considers the DPRK a needed buffer state and seeks to maintain the status quo. This limits Chinese motivation to push Pyongyang to make the concessions necessary to resume multilateral negotiations.

Moreover, should dialogue recommence, complete denuclearization is unlikely – if not impossible – because the DPRK considers nuclear weapons a totemic symbol of national power, which assure respect, fulfill a deterrent role, guarantee regime survival, and are useful (to a point) as negotiating cards. With Kim Jong Il’s death, the DPRK is even more unlikely to abandon its nuclear weapons: Kim Jong Un will be more dependent than his father on those weapons to provide for the DPRK’s security. Pyongyang seeks acceptance of the DPRK as a de facto nuclear-weapon state while obtaining aid, security guarantees, and other concessions from the international community. The maturation of its nuclear program – the seeming acquisition of a highly enriched uranium program – is especially worrying as it is an alternate, less detectable path to nuclear weapon development, it provides fuel for light-water reactors, and it frees up elements of the plutonium program to be traded away.

From a US perspective, Pyongyang has several priorities as it engages Seoul. The first is buying time to consolidate Kim Jong Un’s power; thus, new provocations *à la* Cheonan or Yeonpyeong island are unlikely. Pyongyang has already pocketed Seoul’s newfound moderation and absent a strong push from the United States and China, it has few incentives to re-engage the ROK. It is more likely to wait for regime change in the South – and try to make that outcome more likely – in the hope that a progressive government will engage the North on easier terms. Our speaker noted US pronouncements that the path to better US-DPRK relations runs through Seoul should be emphasized at every opportunity.

Young and inexperienced he may be, but our US speaker argued that the international community would be foolish to underestimate Kim Jong Un. His relations with the military seem to be good and the state apparatus needs him for legitimacy. In the near to medium term, stability is likely. The DPRK’s problems, however, are serious: it is in industrial decline, it suffers from agricultural shortfalls, it is isolated internationally and under severe sanctions, social change inside the country is leading to rising expectations, and reforms appear both essential and impossible. The resumption of dialogue may be on the horizon but prospects are uncertain. While the prospects for talks are limited, our US presenter made a powerful case to resume dialogue, most importantly, to buy time and insofar as possible reduce the problem by exploring new initiatives and testing the new leadership. This is important (and urgent) because the DPRK is developing nuclear and missile capabilities that will soon be able to strike the United States. He endorsed a top-down approach, i.e., a presidential-level dialogue with the DPRK leadership through a special envoy to outline an agreement and reach understanding on common principles, goals, and commitments. Senior diplomats can then take care of implementation. Success is

unlikely but making those efforts would help build an international consensus for a tougher approach and provide the basis to isolate the regime further.

Our ROK speaker concurred with many of those observations. He agreed that the DPRK has dealt successfully with the death of Kim Jong Il and the subsequent transition has been organized and calm. This process seems to have been carefully prepared after his stroke in August 2008. In the short to near-term, it is likely that the new DPRK leadership will manage the succession smoothly; there should be no power struggles in coming months, if at all. The DPRK's foreign and military policies are unlikely to change in the short term.

In the long term, however, the DPRK has no choice but to adopt radical reforms. These reforms may prove fatal to Kim Jong Un, who, unlike his father, has not had time to consolidate a power base. Compounding his difficulties are the country's home-grown economic troubles and international sanctions. Perhaps more important is the increasing awareness of DPRK citizens of reality outside DPRK borders. These changes at the grassroots level will continue and should plant seeds of fundamental change that lead eventually to the reunification of the Peninsula.

North Korean opacity meant that our discussion was more speculative than in other sessions; as usual, we had more questions than answers. While it is impossible to know whether Kim Jong Un has real power or is just a figurehead, the consensus on both sides was that he is a genuine leader. While there is going to be a collective decision-making system for some time, one US participant noted that Kim Jong Il wouldn't set up a system that made his son a mere puppet. (And while Kim Jong Il may have been the ultimate authority in North Korea, he too had to bargain when making decisions; his power was not unfettered.) More importantly, the leadership in Pyongyang knows that they need him for legitimacy; if Kim Jong Un is smart, he should realize that other members of the top leadership need him more than he needs any one of them. Tensions are likely to rise when Kim Jong Un starts making decisions on his own and initiates a new distribution of assets and power; what happens when he starts to change the status quo? The group was urged to focus on the next level of leadership – who are the next generation of rising stars and who will Kim be making alliances with?

We also explored China's role in the transition. Beijing is central to this process, providing both economic and political support. What isn't clear to outsiders is the quid pro quo. All agree that China wants stability; other participants believe that Beijing will push for economic reform – in the Chinese model – to promote stability on one of its borders. But the notion that China can “push” reform (or anything for that matter) seems over-optimistic: for all that backing and the “lips and teeth” relationship, there is no love lost between the neighbors.

Assessments and Implications of Deterrence Policy

In the second day, the program drilled down on alliance issues. Our US speaker detailed key elements of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR): preventing nuclear proliferation and terrorism; reducing the role of nuclear weapons in US security strategy; maintaining deterrence and stability; strengthening regional deterrence and reassuring allies, and maintaining a safe and secure nuclear arsenal. The US continues to implement policies to achieve those objectives.

Although New START is being implemented, a new arms control agreement with the Russians will be difficult because of missile defense and verification issues. Despite recent defense budget cuts (\$259 billion), the US defense budget remains high and will increase annually in 2013-2017.

The New Defense Guidance only mentions nuclear weapons once and is consistent with principles detailed in President Obama's Prague speech (that embraced the goal of a world moving toward nuclear zero) and the NPR that the United States will provide security for its allies and partners, albeit with fewer nuclear weapons. There is strong bipartisan consensus on the need to reinvigorate the nuclear infrastructure and fund the nuclear triad: the United States is developing a follow-on SSBN, a follow-on bomber, and air-launched cruise missiles (ALCM) with long-range standoff. It is also taking steps to develop a long-range standoff weapon likely to be both nuclear- and conventional-capable. The United States will maintain a strong and secure nuclear force and infrastructure.

The Strategic Review of the Nuclear Posture is not yet complete and will not change the current posture. The mention of Conventional Prompt Global Strike in the National Defense Guidance is also evidence of the commitment to maintain the ability of the United States to project power globally. This initiative will play a deterrence role to complement nuclear weapons.

Our ROK speaker began with the reminder that for all its growth, South Korea remains a shrimp among whales in Northeast Asia and the US is the guardian of ROK security. The US-ROK alliance is strong, but to maintain that strength Seoul must significantly increase its share of the defense burden. That logic compelled President Lee Myung-bak to order modification of the Defense Reform Plan 2020 in the wake of the renegotiation of the timeframe of OPCON transfer. Approved by President Lee in March 2011, "Defense Reform Plan 307," which has yet to complete the legislative process, focuses on doctrinal change to cope with the DPRK threat, reorganization of the command and control and force structure, and the enhancement of deterrence capabilities.

Traditionally, the ROK focused on maintaining peaceful inter-Korean relations by upholding the doctrine of "defense by denial." This aimed at containing DPRK provocations and preventing escalation to a war, but it gave the DPRK operational freedom to choose the location and timing of its attacks without risking serious retaliation from the ROK. Under the new doctrine of "proactive deterrence," the ROK will make prompt, focused, and proportional retaliation against DPRK attacks. "Prompt," because it will conduct a counterattack on the spot; "focused," because the ROK will limit itself to counterattacks on the source of the enemy's attack or a related line of command; "proportional" because the ROK will not make extended retaliation. Moreover, should the DPRK prepare attacks using WMD, the ROK reserves the right to preemptively destroy launch facilities and command structures used for the anticipated attack(s) – and to do so with non-nuclear means. The aim of the new doctrine is to dissuade the DPRK from planning provocations in the first place.

In 2015, the ROK is scheduled to take wartime OPCON from the Combined Forces Command (CFC) and the chairman of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff will become commander of the CFC, exercising command and control of the entire ROK armed forces. DRP 307 proposes to

restructure the ROK command and control structure to ensure cooperation between services and the field commanders in joint operations. The plan will also rearrange the position of the service chiefs of the army, navy, and air force. Simplicity, slimness, quick decisions, and maximum jointness are the guiding directives of reform.

Our ROK speaker stressed that effective deterrence requires three things: the possession of capabilities that allow a country to inflict unacceptable damage on an adversary, a strong will to use these capabilities, and communicating intentions and capabilities to the adversary. He argued that the ROK needs to change its priorities in weapon procurement programs: the ROK needs to enhance SRI capabilities, improve air-strike and naval attack capabilities as well as special operation units, and acquire reliable precision-guided munitions. DRP 307 outlines short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans to acquire the capabilities to support the doctrine of proactive deterrence. Ultimately, however, successful implementation will depend on budget considerations.

The majority of discussion focused on ROK defense reform, including the doctrine of “proactive deterrence.” US participants expressed concern about the concept, arguing that it had not been clearly explained; one noted that he was unable to find definitions of either “active deterrence” or “proactive deterrence” on the Ministry of Defense website. Especially worrisome was the potential impact on escalation control: from a US perspective, ROK planners have paid insufficient attention to this problem. While acknowledging ROK frustration at the inability to deter low-level DPRK provocations, Americans argued that such acts do not constitute a failure of deterrence. South Koreans conceded as much, but also insisted that they needed the capacity to respond strongly to North Korean actions.

This triggered a heated discussion of ROK plans to extend the range of its missiles, a range that is currently limited by a bilateral agreement with the US. An ROK participant again framed the issue as one of trust, asserting that the US still thinks the ROK “has sinister intentions.” Americans responded forcefully that mistrust is not the source of US concern – there is no fear that the ROK will launch indiscriminate attacks on the North. While arguing that US policy is rooted in a global context, several participants expressed sympathy for the ROK demand for lengthening the missile range.

While few ROK participants were as blunt as this individual, it is likely that his sentiment – a sense of inequality and unfair treatment – is widespread. The US needs to address this more openly, explaining the source of disagreements with the ROK and making clear that it is not an issue of trust. While the specifics of the debate are “technical,” a US participant reminded the group that the most important messages come from the top political leadership.

We also spent time on cyber-security. Cyber-attacks take numerous forms: some aim at stealing information, some are for espionage purposes, while others are meant to disrupt or destroy capabilities. This wide range of possibilities demands an equally expansive range of responses. Several participants highlighted the attribution problem, and the difficulty that creates for deterring such attacks. One ROK participant explained that preparations had been made to prevent, respond to, and mitigate cyber-attacks and noted that an ROK government conference on the topic would occur in February 2013.

Two other comments should be flagged. First, an ROK participant wondered whether there is a mismatch between US and ROK thinking about deterrence. It seems to him that the US is focusing more on disarmament than deterrence and the NPR appears to move from deterrence by punishment to deterrence by denial. Yet, ROK strategy appears to be moving from deterrence by denial to deterrence by punishment. Aligning these two trends should be an imperative.

The second comment was from a US participant who made plain his concerns about ROK defense modernization efforts. He applauded efforts to improve jointness and contingency planning, a step that should help clarify the ROK JCS role. But he also worries that the ROK isn't spending enough to modernize C4ISR, that the ROK side of the CFC is atrophying, and the future role of the United Nations Command isn't clear.

Extended Deterrence and Regional Contingencies

After taking up extended deterrence more generally, we examined its role in regional contingencies. Our ROK speaker began with the basics, explaining the requirements of extended deterrence (ED) – an operational plan, appropriate capabilities to implement ED, and trust that, regardless of circumstances, action would occur if needed – the components of extended deterrence (the nuclear umbrella, missile defense, and conventional forces), and reminded us that extended deterrence and extended nuclear deterrence are not the same thing. Nuclear weapons, however, remain an essential ingredient of ED. The ROK and the United States coordinate extended deterrence policy through the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee (EDPC).

He then identified specific Korean Peninsula contingencies that would trigger the extended nuclear deterrent (END). Obviously, the use of nuclear weapons by the North will trigger END, but so too would a radioactive terror threat, a direct attack on nuclear facilities in the ROK, an act of nuclear terrorism, the launch of nuclear-tipped missiles in the high seas, along with attacks against ROK citizens and US citizens based in the region. Because the ROK does not contemplate attacks from China, extended deterrence doesn't target that country. Similarly, because ROK cooperation with Japan has not reached the alliance level, an attack against Japan would not be regarded as an attack against the ROK, although ROK forces would coordinate efforts with the United States.

The credibility of the US extended deterrent gets high marks. In particular, he praised the role of the EDPC. Still, he urged the US to regularly reiterate its commitment to ED. Emphasis on the role of US Forces Korea would pay real dividends as the US implements defense cuts. Efforts should be made to enhance the ROK's missile capabilities, notably through long-range ballistic missiles. While US allies have a role to play in consolidating deterrence as the US reconfigures its forces, he warned against a call for a sudden increase in burden sharing. This is politically undesirable. Instead, the US should ask the ROK for more global contributions – this is more palatable.

He also called for more thorough preparation on contingencies to enhance escalation control. The EDPC is ideal for this purpose. He even endorsed a Japanese role in a Korean

Peninsula contingency – although this is an extremely sensitive subject and must be done gradually to work through long-standing tensions in ROK-Japan relations.

Our US speaker explained that deterring a poorly understood adversary is difficult because changing that enemy's calculus demands an appreciation of its logic. It isn't impossible however, because the signaling of resolve and the readiness to defend interests shapes perceptions. If proscribed actions are clear, consequences are credible, and capabilities exist to enforce threats, deterrence can succeed, even absent an accurate understanding of the target state.

Our speaker argued that the consensus view of North Korea is that there is more continuity than change after Kim Jong Il's death. If that assessment is correct, then the policies that have worked thus far are likely to continue to be effective. The key is determining the extent to which Pyongyang seeks to preserve the security status quo or to challenge it: only this should determine whether competitive deterrence or cooperative threat reduction policies are more appropriate.

Our US speaker agreed with his ROK counterpart on the centrality of the EPDC. This group is key to the orchestration of strategic messaging by the two governments to Pyongyang and ensuring that the alliance works in tandem. The EPDC, along with other alliance mechanisms, must send the DPRK the message that the alliance is ready and united to tackle any threats or challenges.

Our discussion focused on the basics. Thus, the first question is whether North Korea is deterred by the US extended deterrent. The answer seems to be 'yes.' The constant references in North Korean official pronouncements and the media to US nuclear capabilities and Washington's "hostile intent" and "preemptive nuclear attack strategy" underscore the importance the DPRK attaches to the US extended deterrent.

Reassurance is another matter, however. One ROK participant was blunt, saying "there is no question about the US commitment to South Korea's defense." Any questions reflect the "how" of that commitment. At the same time, there is, as this report notes, genuine angst in South Korea about the US readiness to see the ROK as an equal partner; this manifests itself in powerful debates over subsidiary issues, such as pyro-processing, missile technology, OPCON transfer, or burden sharing. It is hard to see how disagreements can be isolated – or more significantly, how the alliance can be insulated from the spillover of such emotional arguments. The ROK belief that it isn't trusted by the US is difficult to reconcile with the statement that the alliance is strong. Such an attitude, if widespread, must be corrosive.

ROK participants understand that extended deterrence does not necessarily require a nuclear component. They also appreciate the need for more burden-sharing to make both the extended deterrent and their defense policy more credible generally. As part of this effort, the issue of missile ranges was raised again. When a US participant noted that the Missile Technology Control Regime could be a bar to that program, an ROK participant stated that "like the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime can be amended." Here, too, South Korean participants reiterated the suggestion that ROK burdens be apportioned

globally, rather than just on the Korean Peninsula. This would be more “politically acceptable” in the ROK.

Considerable time was spent debating the need to detail the specific conditions that would trigger a response and what that response would be. (The alternative to spelling out the consequences of aggression is to reserve the right to respond “with all available means” and leave it to the adversary to fill in the blanks). US participants stressed that it is not helpful to specify when, where, and how the United States would respond; in addition, flexibility allows Washington to calibrate responses – and it is unlikely that the US could identify every possible contingency. And as one US participant warned, “red lines become red carpets.” Most ROK participants agreed, acknowledging that such decisions are contingent on circumstances, including who is making them. But while conceding the power of that logic, some ROK participants said that providing particulars would help reassure South Korea. One ROK participant, however, warned the group that the United States would be expected to use nuclear weapons against the DPRK if Pyongyang were to launch a nuclear attack on ROK soil.

The Future of the US-ROK Alliance

Our final session looked into the future of the alliance and ways to strengthen it further. Our US presenter characterized the alliance as “as strong as ever.” While the two countries are “walking in lockstep,” there are important divergences in policy and outlook (all of which have been identified in this report). For him, proactive deterrence is a big question mark: while Seoul must have the capacity to defend itself and exercise its right of self-defense, it does raise concerns about proportionality and escalation. He also flagged the US provision of critical enabling capabilities – C4ISR – which means that the US must be involved in operational as well as policy discussions. He suggested more discussion between the US and the ROK (in the EDPC and elsewhere) about escalation, risks, and thinking about DPRK logic and intentions.

Our speaker also underscored the importance of trilateral cooperation between the US, the ROK, and Japan as a means of buttressing deterrence. He was especially encouraged by the December 2010 trilateral foreign ministers’ statement and the beginning of discussions between the ROK and Japan on an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA). The lack of progress on an information sharing agreement is disheartening. He urged all three countries to see their alliances, and trilateral cooperation, as a public good.

Concluding, he urged participants to not ask too much of deterrence, as deterring all types of provocations imposes a far more demanding standard on this policy tool than empirical evidence supports. Deterrence should be held to the same standard it was during the Cold War – which was the deterrence of war. Deterrence on the Peninsula must leave no doubt that war, whether deliberate or prompted by inadvertent escalation, will not prolong the regime’s survival but rather accelerate its demise.

Our ROK speaker began by noting that the US-ROK alliance is one of the most successful alliances of the last half-century and that it has evolved from a sponsor of ROK security to a more equal strategic partnership between the ROK and the United States. In recent years, US-ROK cooperation has been advanced considerably with the adoption of “The Joint

Vision for the Alliance” in June 2009 that presents a longer-term blueprint for the partnership. This Vision allowed the United States and the ROK to settle a variety of contentious issues in their relationship, including the adjustment of wartime operational control transfer. The alliance has performed well when tested by North Korean provocations. This record of success reflects the strong trust between the two countries despite changes in the regional and global strategic environments.

To maintain those strong bonds, the two countries have to address important challenges. One is domestic politics. Although domestic political developments have never derailed the alliance, they have posed problems – and look set to potentially do so again. It is imperative to institutionalize bilateral cooperation channels. Also important is the successful implementation of the KORUS FTA. Dealing with North Korea will be especially exhilarating. Success requires the maintenance of a solid, combined defense posture, including the division of military roles between the US and the ROK to maximize their combined deterrent force during the transfer of wartime operational control. China’s rise looms over all regional developments. Responding to it demands an elaborate political and strategic approach. The current ROK-Japan-China trilateral framework is a good starting point to build trust. Shifts in US military strategy and anticipated budget cuts can affect the alliance, but the ROK anticipates a strong US commitment to maintain and strengthen its military presence in the Asia-Pacific.

All agreed that the alliance is strong, and both governments should take pride and some comfort from the fact that there have been no provocations in the year and months since the shelling of Yeongpyeong Island. The 2009 Joint Vision statement provides a framework with which the two countries can continue to fortify their partnership, but its potential is just that – potential, not yet realized. While participants in the “2+2” process should begin to put flesh on the bones of that vision, this cannot be an “elite” process only. The publics must be engaged as well.

The coming months are likely to provide tests, however, Elections in both countries could move the center of gravity in both countries – and the shifts are likely to increase the distance between the two allies, not bring them closer together. Those shifts could magnify the differences between the two countries on issues ranging from the KORUS FTA to pyro-processing restrictions.

While we couldn’t reach agreement on how to resolve each issue, we have suggestions on ways to minimize the impact of disagreements. First, all participants agreed that neither country should make the alliance a domestic political issue. Disputes should be confined to the arena in which they are relevant, and not made issues of national pride or status. To that end, a US participant urged ROK counterparts to prioritize their concerns. The future of the alliance cannot hang on the resolution of each disagreement. Second, asymmetries in this relationship are inevitable. Nevertheless, both governments must be aware of the optics of alliance disputes and try to reach a politically acceptable balance. Third, solutions have to be bilateral. This is a partnership. Neither government should act unilaterally. Fourth, both sides need to recognize the changes in the regional security environment and the fact that this is a post-Cold War world. To that end, more attention should be paid to ways to network alliances and build larger security relationships to capture efficiencies and better distribute burdens. Fifth, each country must be

more aware of how its outlook differs fundamentally from the other: the US has global concerns, while the ROK's focus is peninsula. This has profound implications for how each government tries to resolve disputes. And finally, a US participant urged the ROK to stay on its current path and demonstrate the leadership that it is capable of exercising. "Global Korea" should survive Lee Myung-bak. That confidence is an essential precursor for the robust, resilient, and responsive alliance that has emerged in recent years and made such powerful contributions to regional peace and security.

APPENDIX A

The Fourth US-ROK Strategic Dialogue February 9-10, 2012

AGENDA

Thursday, February 9, 2012

9:00 Welcome remarks

9:15 Session 1: Security developments and dynamics

This session looks at security developments since we last met, focusing on specific issues and incidents. Is the region more or less stable than the last time we met? What factors are driving regional security policy? What is the impact of elections in the region? What are the prospects after Kim Jong Il's death? How are cross-strait relations? What are the prospects? How have the events of March 11, 2011, notably the Fukushima nuclear accident, affected Japan and its role in the region? What is the situation in the South China Sea? Have the East Asia Summit and related meetings calmed the waters? Has the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq changed security dynamics? What is the assessment of the Iranian nuclear program and its impact on security? Discussion of China apart from its role in specific issues should be withheld until the next session; Korean Peninsula issues will be taken up in Session 4.

US speaker: James Kelly

ROK speaker: Chung Min Lee

10:45 Coffee break

11:00 Session 2: Strategic assessment

This session examines views of the balance of power in Asia. How do participants characterize that balance? What role do nuclear weapons play in that balance? How do they interpret "the US return to Asia"? How is the "strategic pivot" being implemented? What are the constraints? Has US engagement with the region changed? If so how? How is the other country's relations with China seen and what impact does that have on your relationship with your ally? How are other countries responding to the rise of China and its status in the region?

US speaker: Robert Gromoll

ROK speaker: Byung-Se Yun

12:30 Lunch

13:45 Session 3: Domestic politics: transition and the deterrent

Here we explore the impact of domestic politics on the alliance, focusing on how politics affect the credibility of the alliance. Do US defense and nuclear budget debates and

developments affect views of the US, its credibility and commitment to the region? Will US policy toward Asia, the ROK, the DPRK, the alliance, change if a Republican wins the White House? Will a second Obama administration differ from the first? What does the political landscape in South Korea look like? How have National Assembly elections impacted the bilateral relationship? How have they affected the presidential campaign and that election?

US speaker: Gordon Flake

ROK speaker: Kim Hyunwook

15:15 Coffee break

15:30 Session 4: Korean Peninsula developments

This session will dig into developments in North Korea and their impact on the ROK and the alliance with the US? How does the North's program to become a "rich and prosperous nation" affect regional relations? Is Pyongyang acting more responsibly? Have N-S tensions abated? Why? What is next, notably after Kim Jong Il's death? What is the status of the Six-Party Talks? Are Seoul and Washington in agreement on how they assess the the North's nuclear program and how to proceed? What is China's proper role when dealing with North Korea?

US speaker: Evans Revere

ROK speaker: Cheon Seongwhun

17:00 Session adjourns

Friday, February 10, 2012

9:00 Session 5: Assessments and implications of deterrence policy

This session explores military policy. ROK participants should explain the concept of "proactive deterrence" and how it is supposed to work. How has ROK military policy and thinking changed since the incidents of 2010? What is the status of the move to transfer wartime control of OPCON to the ROK in 2015? What was recommended by the Defense Reform Committee (chaired by Rhee Sang-woo) and what is the status of those recommendations? Will defense policy change after the presidential election? How? What is the status and purpose of the new naval bases being built in the south, in Jeju and Ulleungdo? What has been the result of the US post-Nuclear Posture Review review? What are its implications for the alliance? Both sides should examine cybersecurity, how it fits into the deterrence discussion, and whether the two countries can and should step up cooperation in this field.

US speaker: Elaine Bunn

ROK speaker: Rhee Sang Woo

10:45 Coffee break

11:00 Session 6: Extended deterrence and dealing with regional contingencies

This session explores thinking in each country about what is required to make extended deterrence (ED) work. What are the components of ED? How does ED differ from extended nuclear deterrence (END)? When and how can ED/END be applied? Do requirements change depending on the circumstances – what is being defended, who is being deterred – in specific Northeast Asia contexts? What should the US do to make its ED more credible? What can allies do to increase the credibility of extended deterrence? What can they do to enhance escalation control? In particular, what role would US forces in Japan play in a Korean contingency? What are its implications for the extended deterrent and the alliance?

US speaker: Van Jackson

ROK speaker: Shin Beomchul

12:30 Lunch

13:45 Session 7: The future of the US-ROK alliance

This session invites specific recommendations on what the two countries can do to promote regional security and stability, specifically within the context of ED/END, and how these policies can strengthen the alliance. How can the US and ROK strengthen their alliance and better cope with future strategic challenges? What role do nuclear weapons play in that equation? What issues deserve more attention? How can trilateral cooperation between the US, the ROK, and Japan be enhanced?

US speaker: Michael Urena

ROK speaker: Kim Kyou-hyun

15:15 Coffee break

15:30 Session 8: Next steps and concluding remarks

16:30 Meeting adjourns

APPENDIX B

The Fourth US-ROK Strategic Dialogue February 9-10, 2012

PARTICIPANT LIST

Korea

Dr. Cheon Seongwhun
Senior Research Fellow
Korea Institute for National Unification

Capt. Hong Beom Hur
ROK Defense Attaché to Hawaii
ROK Navy Captain

Mr. Kang Hyun Chul
Second Secretary
ROK-US Security Cooperation Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dr. Kim Hyunwook
Assistant Professor
Department of American Studies
Institute of Foreign Studies and National
Security

Amb. Kim Kyou-hyun
Special Advisor to the Minister
Ambassador for Performance
Evaluation

Mr. Kim Tae Jin
Director
ROK-US Security Cooperation Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dr. Chung Min Lee
Dean and Professor
Graduate School of International Studies
Yonsei University

Mr. Rhee Sang Woo
President
New Asia Research Institute

Dr. Shin Beomchul
Director, North Korea Studies
Korea Institute for Defense Analyses

Consul General Young-Kil Suh
Consulate General of the Republic of
Korea

Mr. Byung-Se Yun
Visiting Professor, Graduate School of
International Studies, Sogang University
Senior Advisor, Kim & Chang

US

Ms. M. Elaine Bunn
Director, Future Strategic Concepts
Program
Institute for National Strategic Studies
National Defense University

Mr. David Carlson
Senior Analyst
PACOM DPRK Strategic Focus Group
US Pacific Command

Mr. Ralph A. Cossa
President
Pacific Forum CSIS

Mr. L. Gordon Flake
Executive Director
The Maureen and Mike Mansfield
Foundation

Mr. Markus V. Garlauskas
Chief, Strategy Division
Office of the ACofS, U/C/J5, UNC/CFC
US Forces Korea

Mr. Brad Glosserman
Executive Director
Pacific Forum CSIS

Dr. Robert H. Gromoll
Director
Office of Regional Affairs (ISN/RA)
U.S. Dept. of State

Mr. David W. Hamon
Director, Office of Strategic Research &
Dialogues Strategy and Plans Enterprise
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

Mr. Van A. Jackson
Senior Country Director for Korea
Office of the Secretary of Defense

Mr. James A. Kelly
President
EAP Associates, LLC

Mr. Weston S. Konishi
Associate Director of Asia-Pacific
Studies
Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis

Dr. Michael S. Malley
Lecturer, Department of National
Security Affairs, PASCC
Naval Postgraduate School

Adm. Michael McDevitt, USN (Ret.)
Vice President
Director, CNA Strategic Studies
CNA Corporation

Mr. Evans J.R. Revere
Senior Director
Albright Stonebridge Group

Dr. David Santoro
Senior Fellow for Non-Proliferation and
Disarmament Affairs
Pacific Forum CSIS

Mr. Shane Smith
WMD Center
National Defense University

Mr. Michael Urena
Strategic Engagement Division
Office of Strategic Affairs
Bureau of Arms Control, Compliance
and Verification
US Department of State

Mr. Robert J. Vince
Director, Nuclear Deterrence Policy
Strategic Arms Control Policy (acting)
US Department of Defense

Mr. David Jonathan Wolff
Lead Associate
Booz Allen Hamilton